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ABSTRACT

On September 26, 1998, the Maryland Communication Association unanimously approved the "Standards for General Education Speech Communication Courses in Maryland Higher Education Institutions." On February 10, 1999, the state's interseqmental Chief Academic Officers (CAO) group endorsed the standards for inclusion in their "Guiding Principles for General Education." This paper first describes the long and difficult route to this achievement, next lists the 16 Guiding Principles for General Education, and then outlines Maryland's Standards for General Education Speech Communication Courses. The paper also cites the recommendations of the CAO group as to components in their definition of the Arts and Humanities Area Group in General Education and their recommendations as to the components in their definition of the Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues Area Group in General Education. (NKA)

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C. General Education Standards for Speech Communication in Maryland Higher Education

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On September 26, 1998, the Maryland Communication Association unanimously approved the *Standards for General Education Speech Communication Courses in Maryland Higher Education institutions.* On February 10, 1999, the state's Intersegmental Chief Academic Officers (CAO) group endorsed the standards for inclusion in their *Guiding Principles for General Education.*

The route to this unprecedented achievement required a long, difficult trek across a political minefield of opponents and skeptics. The opponents ranged from academic officers who declared speech communication a non-discipline to those who felt threatened by speech communication's entry into their territory, e.g., English, psychology, sociology. As the representative from Prince George's Community College to the Chief Academic Officers Group, I came well prepared to counter the opponents and reassure the skeptics that speech communication is a bone fide discipline worthy of inclusion in the general education pantheon.

At first it was difficult to get the other academic officers to see the divine wisdom of including speech communication as a general education course. As it turned out, however, our strongest arguments put us in the same camp with disciplines that have always been accepted as general education courses. At first some of the CAOs argued that speech was just a skills course-not lofty enough for general education. The answer: If we are going to exclude skills courses, we should also exclude English composition and foreign language studies. Show me the theory (with apologies to Jerry McGuire) in an English composition or foreign language course! A brief look at the theory in our best basic course textbooks dispelled the no-discipline argument.

The other response that overcome objections was the close relationship of communication studies to the CAO's own criteria for defining arts and humanities courses----"the ability for expression orally and through writing, a proficiency in analysis, a facility for reading and listening, a capacity for, and exercise of creativity, an appreciation of expression, and a nurturance of good citizenship and personal responsibility." A rigorous basic speech communication course meets all of these criteria.

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The final argument set forth was the "we have communication across the curriculum, so why do we need a speech course?" The answer: "You also have writing across the curriculum, so why keep offering English composition as a general education course?" Bolstered with surveys from academic and business sources reinforcing the importance of oral communication (particularly interpersonal and small group communication) to student and career success, speech communication earned its rightful place in the state's legislature-approved, general education regulations. Two-years of arguing, negotiating, regulation-writing, and campaigning led to a set of standards for general education requirements in speech communication that have become a model for other disciplines in the state of Maryland.

The following page lists some of the guiding principles that emerged from developing the Maryland Communication Association's general education standards.

Guiding Principles for General Education

A general education communication course/program should:

1. be supported and offered by all communication departments/programs.

2. support an institution's strategic plan and mission.

3. support an institution's standards and requirements for general education courses.

4. be developed and continuously improved by communication faculty, that is, faculty with experience and credentials in communication studies.

5. qualify as a general education course in one or more institution-specific general education categories, e.g., arts and humanities, communication, behavioral science.

6. include communication theories, contemporary research, discipline-based scholarship, and methods in inquiry.

7. reflect a well-researched, common definition of communication as articulated by communication faculty.

8. set forth major course/program objectives that reflect discipline scholarship and best practices.

9. establish measurable objectives and criteria for assessment.

10. be offered through a variety of formats and schedules.

11. be taught by qualified communication faculty.

12. be supported by mediated instruction.

13. transfer to other institutions of higher education in the state.

14. achieve the following general goals: (a) Students will be able to apply communication theory, research, principles, and practices to communication in a variety of contexts; (b) Students will be able to develop effective messages and express themselves competently and responsibly in a variety of contexts; (c) students will be able to understand, analyze, and appreciate effective communication in a variety of contexts.

15. include at least 80% of the following core components: Communication theory/communication process; Perception; Critical thinking; Listening; Verbal communication; Nonverbal communication; Audience/listener analysis/adaptation; Situational analysis/adaptation; Communication confidence; Message organization; Message types/formats; Message expression/media' Message evaluation; Communication research; Communication ethics.

16. include a variety of course/program options depending on a department's and institution's mission and capabilities: Introduction to Communication; Public/Presentation Speaking; Interpersonal Communication; Group Communication; Business/Professional Communication; Argumentation and Debate; Persuasion; Communication Theory.

Note 1: In the M*aryland State Standards for General Education Requirements*, the term "speech communication" was chosen after extended debate about the use of the word "speech." Without the term "speech," the course **could** be interpreted as an English composition course or be relegated to an English Department. Given that the CAO group referred to the discipline as *speech*, the term was left in to make sure that there were no misunderstandings about the discipline in which the communication course should be housed.

Note 2: In this document, the phrase course/program is used to acknowledge that at some institutions speech communication is a component of a comprehensive communication course, i.e. one that includes writing and speaking. The Maryland Communication Association, however, strongly endorsed the concept of a single speech communication course as the best option for achieving general education goals.

Standards for General Education Speech Communication Courses in Maryland Higher Education Institutions

Approved by the Maryland Communication Association

September 26, 1998

Endorsed by the Maryland Intersegmental Chief Academic Officers Group

April 14, 1999

Definition of the Speech Communication Discipline

The general education course in Speech Communication employs as its core the definition of communication studies developed and adopted by the Association for Communication Administration.

Definition: The field of **communication** *focuses* on how people use verbal and nonverbal messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. It *promotes* the effective and ethical practice of human communication.[1[1]]

Core Components

Speech Communication courses should include at least 12 (80 percent) of the following core components in order to qualify as a general education course.

1. Communication theory and the communication process

2. The role of personal perception in communication

[1[1]]This definition was developed at the Defining the Field of Communication Studies Conference sponsored by the Association for Communication Administration in cooperation with the National Communication Association, July 28-30, 1995. Please note that the term *communication* has supplanted the term *speech* in many departments and courses. Moreover, the Speech Communication Association has changed its name to the National Communication Association.

3. The role of communication in critical thinking and decision making

4. Listening

5. Verbal communication (language)

6. Nonverbal communication

7. Audience analysis and adaptation

8. Situational analysis and adaptation

9. Communication confidence

10. Development and organization of messages

11. Message types (relational, informative, persuasive, etc.)

12. Message expression (choice and effective use of appropriate communication channels and media)

13. Analysis and evaluation of verbal and nonverbal messages

14. The role of research in facilitating informed communication

15. Communication ethics

General Education Course Areas

In general, the following basic-level communication courses could qualify as general education courses at institutions of higher education if they include at least 12 (80%) of the aforementioned core components:

Introduction to/Fundamentals of Communication (intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, and public communication)

Public Speaking/Presentation Speaking/Public Address
Interpersonal Communication

Small Group Communication/Group Discussion
Business and Professional Communication/Organizational Communication
Argumentation and Debate
Communication Theory
Other courses that include at least 80 percent of the 15 core components may qualify as general education courses.

Although many of these courses focus on understanding and developing communication competencies, others have more of a theoretical focus that concentrates on understanding, analyzing, and appreciating the role of communication in personal, professional, and societal relationships.

Note: This document does not require institutions to include speech communication courses in their general education curriculum. However, when institutions do include speech communication courses in the general education core, such courses must adhere to the standards advanced in this document.

The Arts and Humanities Area Group in General Education

The state of Maryland's Chief Academic Officers (CAO) group has recommended the following components in their definition of the Arts and Humanities Area Group in General Education.

Arts and Humanities courses:

* develop the students' ability to express themselves in a competent, reasonable, and responsible manner;
* advance the students' appreciation of communication through the representation of thoughts and ideas;
* foster an understanding of human values, experience, and environment;
* provide students with an understanding of historical contexts (the relationships to other times and cultures); the medium of communication (including the analysis and assessment of the actual means of expression); the views of others (by accommodating and appreciating different values and ideas); and the ability to expound one's own values.

The CAO group also established that general education courses in the arts and humanities should develop the following proficiencies in the student:

* an ability of expression orally and through writing

* a proficiency in analysis
* a facility for reading and listening
* a capacity for and exercise of creativity (including new and original interpretations)
* an appreciation of expression (written, visual art, or performing art)
* a nurturance of good citizenship and personal responsibility

Speech Communication as a Core of Arts and Humanities

Speech Communication courses include the majority of Arts and Humanities components and proficiencies recommended by the CAO group.

The following description of general education Speech Communication courses includes both the definitional and skills components of the arts and humanities requirements specified by the CAO group:

> *A general education Speech Communication course improves students' ability of expression both orally and in writing; develops proficiency in listening, critical thinking, and message analysis; fosters creativity through a variety of communication assignments; enhances appreciation and understanding of various forms of expression/communication; and nurtures good citizenship and personal responsibility through the study of communication ethics.*

General Education Speech Communication Competencies

By including at least 12 (80 percent) of the 15 core components previously listed, a student taking a Speech Communication course qualifying as a general education course should be able to demonstrate the competencies listed below. After each competency statement, specific behaviors are listed that a student should demonstrate in order to be considered competent.

1. The Communication Process

   Competent communicators can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

   a. the variables influencing the communication process,

   b. the effects of personal perception on the quality and effectiveness of communication,

c. the influence of the speaker, the audience, and the situation on communication choices, and

d. the role of communication in critical thinking and decision making.

2. Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Competent communicators can

a. select, effectively use, and adapt to different forms of verbal and nonverbal communication,

b. use language and nonverbal communication that respects and adapts to listeners' backgrounds and individual differences, and

c. give constructive verbal and nonverbal feedback through effective listening behaviors.

3. Message Development and Organization

Competent communicators can

a. identify message types by their communication goals,

b. generate ideas and select appropriate message components,

c. select appropriate and effective channels and media for communication,

d. research and select appropriate supporting material, and

e. choose appropriate and effective organizing methods.

4. Audience and Context Analysis

   Competent communicators can

   a. analyze and adapt to different sizes and types of audiences, and

   b. analyze and adapt to different contexts (situations, occasions, settings).

5. Expression

   Competent communicators can

   a. manage communication anxiety and apprehension,

   b. transmit messages using delivery skills suitable to the purpose, audience, and setting,

   c. speak clearly and expressively, and

   d. demonstrate nonverbal behaviors that support the verbal message.

6. Listening

   Competent communicators can

   a. receive, interpret, and appropriately respond to verbal and nonverbal messages, and

   b. identify the main ideas and supporting materials in a message.

   c. attend with an open mind, and

   d. identify and use different listening skills appropriate for diverse listening situations.

7. Analysis and Evaluation

   Competent communicators can

   a. distinguish among statements of fact, inference, and opinion; between emotional and logical arguments; and between objective and biased messages,

   b. effectively analyze and evaluate the content and delivery of verbal and nonverbal messages, and

   c. express opinions and ask questions constructively.

8. Ethics

   Competent communicators can

   a. exercise personal responsibility in making communication decisions, and

   b. discuss ethical issues associated with effective communication in society.

Arts and Humanities Area Group and Speech Communication Course Competencies

The following table demonstrates the ways in which a general education Speech Communication courses address all of the Arts and Humanities competencies established by the Chief Academic Officers group.

Arts & Humanities **Communication Competencies**	**Oral and Written Expression**	**Proficiency in Analysis**	**Reading and Listening**	**Creativity**	**Appreciation of Expression**	**Citizenship and Personal Responsibility**
Communication Process	X	x	x		x	x
Verbal/Nonverbal Communication	X	x	x	x	x	x
Message Development & Organization	X	x	x	x	x	x
Audience & Context Analysis		x	x		x	x
Expression	X	x		x	x	
Listening		x	x		x	x
Analysis & Evaluation	X	x	x	x	x	x
Ethics	X	x	x		x	x

The Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues Area Group in General Education

The state's Chief Academic Officers (CAO) group also recommended the following components in their definition of the Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues Area Group in General Education.

> (1) In addition to the five required areas . . . of this regulation, a public institution may include up to 8 semester hours in a sixth category that addresses emerging issues that institutions have identified as essential to a full program of general education for their students. These courses may:
>
> > (a) Be integrated into other general education courses or may be presented as separate courses; and
> >
> > (b) Include courses that:
> >
> > > (i) Provide an interdisciplinary examination of issues across the five areas, or
> > >
> > > (ii) Address other categories of knowledge, skills, and values that lie outside of the five areas.
>
> (2) Public institutions may not include the courses in this section in a general education program unless they provide academic content and rigor equivalent to the areas in (the following section) of this regulation.

J. General education courses shall reflect current scholarship in the discipline and provide reference to theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry appropriate to academic disciplines.
K. Courses that are theoretical may include applications, but all applications courses shall include theoretical components if they are to be included as meeting general education requirements.
L. Public institutions may incorporate knowledge and skills involving the use of quantitative data, effective writing, information retrieval, and information literacy when possible in the general education program.

The CAO group recommended that general education courses in interdisciplinary and emerging issues should use the following requirements to guide course development:

I. An Interdisciplinary Issues course is one in which a broad theme is examined from multiple perspectives and leads to a synthesis of experiences from at least two of the five general education areas.

II. An Emerging Issues course is one that the institution has determined is of such current significance to the students that it is essential to include as a part of their general education experience. Such a course must be based on a credible body of established scholarship with pertinent evidence of methodology and/or epistemology. In addition, the course must address a body of knowledge, skills, and values that lie predominantly outside the five general education areas.

Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues in Speech Communication Courses

In addition to those Speech Communication courses that meet the Arts and Humanities area group standards, many Speech Communication courses also qualify as Interdisciplinary and/or Emerging Issues courses. The following titles are only offered as examples of courses that would be expected to meet the rigorous criteria set forth by the CAO group:

Intercultural Communication

Mass Communication and Society

Communication Theory

Freedom of Speech

Family/Health/Gender Communication

Political Communication

Oral Communication of Literature

Management Communication

Organizational Communication

Public Relations

Listening

Rhetorical Criticism

History of Rhetoric/Public Address

Mediation and Counseling

Communication Ethics

Linguistics

Instructional Communication

Leadership

Introduction to Mass Communication

Introduction to Telecommunications

Introduction to Communication Research

Negotiation and Conflict Management

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